

## PLACES OF EDUCATIONAL MEMORY: The History of a Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology in the Pages of Their Biographies

Lugares de memória educacional: A história de um instituto federal de educação, ciência e tecnologia nas páginas de suas biografias

Lugares de memoria educativa: La historia de un Instituto Federal de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología en las páginas de sus biografias

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**Abstract:** The objective of this research is to investigate the biographies of a federal institute of education, science and technology as places of memory. Adopting a historical-hermeneutic methodology, based on the work of Paul Ricoeur and his dialectic of explaining-understanding, which allows for the understanding of the text as a sociocultural creation, three biographies published between 2002 and 2017 are analyzed, narrating the trajectory of a federal institute of education, science and technology. The technical, political and pedagogical-academic dimensions are used as categories of analysis. As a result, the structural aspects of the biographies and the underlying meanings of their text are presented, thus identifying the main historical-mnemonic aspects of the organization, highlighting the political dimension as an underlying social fabric that allows for the achievement of socio-organizational life. The apprehension of the political dimension, present in the works without being enunciated, occurs not only through memories but also through silences and omissions.

**Keywords:** history of federal professional education; time; narrative; hermeneutics.

**Resumo:** O objetivo da pesquisa é investigar as biografias de um instituto federal de educação, ciência e tecnologia como lugares de memória. Adotando metodologia histórico-hermenêutica, pautada na obra de Paul Ricoeur e em sua dialética explicar-compreender, que permite o entendimento do texto como criação sociocultural, analisam-se três biografias publicadas entre 2002 e 2017, que narram a trajetória de um instituto federal de educação, ciência e tecnologia. São utilizadas como categorias de análise as dimensões técnica, política e pedagógico-acadêmica. Como resultados, apresentam-se os aspectos estruturais das biografias e os sentidos subjacentes de seu texto, identificando, assim, os principais aspectos histórico-mnemônicos da organização, destacando-se a dimensão política como tessitura social subjacente que permite a consecução da vida sócio-organizacional. A apreensão da dimensão política, presente nas obras sem ser enunciada, se sucede não só com memórias, mas também com silêncios e esquecimentos.

**Palavras-chave:** história da educação profissional federal; tempo; narrativa; hermenêutica.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de esta investigación es indagar en las biografías de un instituto federal de educación, ciencia y tecnología como espacios de memoria. Adoptando una metodología histórico-hermenéutica, basada en la obra de Paul Ricoeur y su dialéctica de explicación y comprensión, que permite comprender el texto como creación sociocultural, se analizan tres biografías publicadas entre 2002 y 2017, que narran la trayectoria de un instituto federal de educación, ciencia y tecnología. Se utilizan como categorías de análisis las dimensiones técnica, política y pedagógico-acadêmica. Como resultados, se presentan los aspectos estructurales de las biografías y los significados subyacentes de su texto, identificando así los principales aspectos histórico mnemónicos de la organización, destacando la dimensión política como tejido social subyacente que permite el logro de la vida socio-organizativa. La apreensión de la dimensión política, presente en las obras sin ser enunciada, ocurre no solo a través de los recuerdos, sino también a través de silencios y omisiones.

**Palabras clave:** historia de la educación profesional federal; tiempo; narrativa; hermenéutica.

## INTRODUCTION

The longevity of federal vocational education, institutionalized since presidential decree No. 7,566 of September 23, 1909, signed by president Nilo Peçanha, in addition to attesting to its importance in the history of education (Ramos, 2014), demands new sources of historical research. It is within this context that the present investigation is situated, seeking to inquire into how biographies function as places of memory.

Biography is a complex phenomenon, investigated by various fields of knowledge. Such investigations address biography from multiple dimensions, such as research method, analytical tool, documentary source, etc. (Loriga, 2011; Dosse, 2015).

The concept of *places of memory* was formulated by the French historian Pierre Nora, belonging to the third generation of the Annales school, created by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch in 1929, which proposed a new conception in historical practice, breaking with the positivist conception of history, in addition to refuting causal explanations, expanding the notion of document and defending the democratization and popularization of history (Le Goff, 1990; Burke, 1992).

Nora forged this concept within the context of the historiographical renewal that occurred in the 1970s, influenced by the *linguistic turn* in philosophy and social sciences, “the shift in the study of the humanities, which ceased to be guided by reference to reality and instead privileged the way in which it is verbally worked” (Lima, 2006, p. 27).

The assumption of memory as a central element in this new way of thinking about and doing history leads Nora (1993) to conceive of places of memory in a nostalgic and biting way. She equates places of memory with remnants and criticizes the excess of memory of the present time, since such excess paradoxically reveals its forgetting. Finally, she defines that

unlike other objects of history, places of memory have no referents. They are their own referent. The place of memory is a double place; a place of excess, closed in on itself, closed in on its identity, and gathered in on its name, but constantly open to the extent of its meanings (Nora, 1993, p. 27).

Methodologically, the qualitative study follows a hermeneutic historical approach, whose dialogical, inductive and reflective process between the cognitive repertoire of the author, the bibliographic review and the critical-analytical interaction apprehends biography as a place of memory, thus enabling historical knowledge (Aróstegui, 2006; Rusen, 2007).

The biographies analyzed, published between 2002 and 2017, tell the story of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Bahia – IFBA, a federal agency linked to the Ministry of Education, which has existed since 1909 and is dedicated to offering free professional and technological education in various teaching, research, and extension modalities.

The text is structured in six parts, including this introduction: the second presents biography as a phenomenon studied in the historical and social sciences. The third part delimits the methodological aspects of the research, based on Paul Ricœur's hermeneutics and his dialectic of explaining and understanding, and provides a concise presentation of the history of IFBA. The fourth part presents the explanatory moment, which outlines the general aspects of biographies, and the fifth stage presents the understanding phase, which interprets biographies from three categories: technical, political, and pedagogical-academic. The final considerations summarize the investigated trajectory.

## **BIOGRAPHY AS A PROBLEM: BETWEEN HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES.**

Biography, a genre that is hybrid and difficult to define, is situated in the space between literary truth and historical reality (Loriga, 2011; Dosse, 2015), and its complexity makes it a phenomenon investigated by various fields of knowledge, such as history, literary studies, and social sciences (Levillain, 2003; Borges, 2008).

Although the word "biography" only emerged in the 17th century in French and English, writings about life stories flourished in antiquity, being at the core of the foundations of historical discourse. The classical Greek age separated historical narrative, intended for collective events, from biographical description, which recounted facts from the lives of powerful individuals, such as emperors, generals, and religious figures (Levillain, 2003; Loriga, 2011).

Between antiquity – in which Plutarch's work *Parallel Lives* stands out as a model of life narrative concerned with extolling the moral qualities of a character – and modernity – whose highlight is the writings of James Boswell, who became known for bringing biographer and subject closer together, the emphasis on the latter's domestic intimacy, and the use of interviews with close people as a data collection technique – biographical writing has gone through many phases. From panegyrics dedicated to emperors, through the hagiographies of saints in the Middle Ages, Western culture has never ceased to describe human existence (Borges, 2008; Loriga, 2011).

Dosse (2015) presents a regime of historicity proper to biography: a heroic age, marked by elegies to the deeds of great figures, would mark antiquity, the Middle Ages and part of modernity; the modal age, which spans the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, in which biography experiences a conceptual crisis, academically

discredited, emptied of concern for evidence; and a hermeneutic era, from the mid-20th century to the present day, in which the decentering of reason and the critique of the subject based on theories such as psychoanalysis, genealogy and Marxism lead to the assumption of hybrid and flexible identities, valuing individualities.

The use of biography intensifies especially with the emphasis on the individual over the collective. Its presence sharpens the classic debate between structure and agency, both in the historiographical and sociological fields (Rustin, 2000; Gonçalves & Oliveira, 2012).

Thus, the methodological exercise of biography is implicated in theoretical and onto-epistemic questions. Among them are the demand for greater reflexivity based on the contribution of philosophy, to the detriment of quantitative methodologies; a search for harmony between temporalities (cosmological and phenomenological) in the achievement of social structures and processes; and the assumption of memory and narrative as elements that substantiate the biographical phenomenon (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000; Gonçalves & Oliveira, 2012).

Amid the *revival* in the mid-1980s, two thinkers – a historian and a sociologist – offered two of the most referenced critiques regarding biography as a problem: Giovanni Levi and Pierre Bourdieu (Loriga, 1998).

Levi (2006) warns about the application of the same cognitive processes to groups and individuals, and the influence of the former on the latter, which leads to a discussion about the limits of freedom of action in the face of the sociocultural framework of rules that condition human practice (conscious, but limited) and reason (rationality attributed to the biographed characters); even so, he considers biography a privileged space to discuss such issues.

The author also proposes a typology of biographies: modal biographies (illustrating typical forms of behavior or status), contextual biographies (in which the social context overcomes documentary absences through comparisons), extreme case biographies (which explore the margins, the limits of social processes), and hermeneutic biographies (the interpretative act, that is, the passage from action to the writing of the text, reveals an infinite possibility of meanings, which, even so, do not access the totality of possible meanings) (Levi, 2006).

Bourdieu criticizes the notion of trajectory as something linear, a series of (dis)positions successively occupied by the same entity (individual or collective). The understanding of life in this way is idealized and reductionist. It is necessary to consider the meaning and value of changes within the social scope to truly give meaning to a biography, in which the relevance of the network of relationships that constitutes it is a fundamental aspect. An intelligible and coherent totality, guided by the use of rhetorical resources that appear artificial, treating life as a cohesive account of events, reveals what the author called *biographical illusion* (Bourdieu, 2006).

Biography, as a place of memory, becomes a field that generates history, insofar as historiographical practice, within the context of the renewal urged by the *linguistic turn*, handles memory as a complement. To assume the relationship between stored memory and historical writing as an opposition would therefore be a false dilemma (Dosse, 2003; Malerba, 2011), given that “history and collective memory can be thought of as the two ends of an antinomy, in which the advances of historiography continually push back the imaginary past that was constructed by collective memory” (Rossi, 2010, p. 28).

Within the field of educational history, given the incipient and scarce nature of biographical studies, there has been an effort to follow the movements of transformation and openness in contemporary historiography. Thus, research on identity and memory aligns with the understanding of the aspects and itineraries of institutions, aiding in the comprehension of their character, their mission, and how they have shaped their practices during a specific period, thus constituting important instruments for reflection, even though many studies follow the traditional forms of biographical research, which raises the need for an accurate analysis of the uses of biography and, above all, for theoretical-methodological and onto-epistemic reflections on the genre (Amorim et al, 2024; Duarte & Grazziotin, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

Seeking to examine biographies as places of memory, the research adopts a historical-hermeneutical methodology, of a qualitative and inductive nature, characterized by the assumption of singularities, attention to empirical sources, and the task of writing a sequential narrative of events, guided by the following principles (Aróstegui, 2006; Rusen, 2007):

- a) Dialogicity: the researcher's openness to the problems that arise, through the formulation of questions whose answers are constructed in dialogue between the consulted sources and the previous investigation of the phenomenological field being investigated;
- b) Reflexivity: awareness of the procedural and literary aspects intrinsic to historiographical elaboration, based on the particularities of the sources consulted and narratives formulated from the documents, which are ordered according to the researcher's perspective;
- c) Critique of sources: the subjective apprehension of information about human action in the past, based on the verification of the validity and reliability criteria of documents, the moment in which these become sources;

- d) Interpretation: the arrangement of information obtained through the critique of sources in a narrative text that balances that information with the conceptual knowledge of the researcher(s) and a return to the existing bibliography on the problem investigated.

Based on the work of Paul Ricœur (2002; 2011), hermeneutics constitutes a methodological foundation, unfolding in two complementary stages: explanation and comprehension. Explanation is defined by meticulous detailing, by the subordination of the particular case to rules, by the distancing of the object of study in relation to an uninvolved subject, in which a certain degree of objectification is achieved, thanks to the fixation and conservation that writing confers.

The moment of comprehension, on the other hand, is an intuitive and unrestricted apprehension of what is addressed in the field under investigation, through an anticipation of meaning that borders on prediction, through an engagement of the epistemic subject, in which knowledge mediates the signs of the psyche that is alien and external to the text (Ricœur, 2002; 2011).

Thus, during the explanation phase, the content of the three consulted biographies is presented, along with the main general information and their structure, as shown in Chart 1. In the comprehension phase, the mnemonic characteristics discerned in the biographies are reflectively explored. These characteristics are expressed through three categories: technical, political, and pedagogical-academic, delimited by the *raison d'être* of a public organization for professional and technological education in Brazil, which is the provision of teaching, research, and extension, according to current legislation. The arrangement of these dimensions throughout the chapters of the biographies is shown in Table 1.

The organization being studied is the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Bahia – hereinafter IFBA –, a federal institution for professional education linked to SETEC – the Secretariat of Professional and Technological Education, under the Ministry of Education.

Its origins date back to the nineteen schools for apprentice artisans established by Presidential Decree No. 7,566, of September 23, 1909. Since then, throughout its one hundred and sixteen years of history, it has gone through several phases and nomenclatures. The last change was in 2008, with the enactment of Law No. 11,892, of December 29, 2008, which transformed the federal centers for technological education (CEFET) and the federal agricultural schools into federal institutes of education, science and technology.

The law innovated structurally and pedagogically: structurally, because the federal institute has at its core the concept of multiple campuses, in which the campuses would have financial and budgetary autonomy in relation to the rectorate. Pedagogically, they are characterized by multimodality of teaching, offering extension courses and

initial and continuing education, technical courses at the secondary (integrated) and subsequent levels, in addition to undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Currently, IFBA has, in addition to its main campus in Salvador, twenty-two campuses, one advanced center, two campuses under development, five reference centers, and one innovation hub. Furthermore, it offers distance learning in fifty-seven cities. It has approximately thirty-six thousand students, one thousand seven hundred faculty members, and one thousand administrative staff, thus having a presence in 113 cities in the state.

## HERMENEUTICAL EXPLANATION: THE THREE BIOGRAPHIES OF IFBA

Published over a period of fifteen years, between 2002 and 2017, the three biographies of IFBA reveal specific contingencies. All have an official appearance, being available on the institutional website (Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Bahia, n.d.).

The first one is called “CEFET – BA: A historical review: from the porridge school to the integrated technological education complex”, published in 2002, authored by professor and historian José Silva Lessa <sup>1</sup>. The 100-page work reflects the moment in which it was created, as the text is the result of an effort to establish a *center of historical memory for CEFET-BA*; that is, the initiative to promote such an action, highlighting its then ninety-three years, came from the administration. This information is in the book's introduction, written by the social communication coordination.

The book has three chapters. Before that, in the introduction, the author provides a preamble to the history of vocational education, from its emergence in the Middle Ages to its institutionalization in Brazil with the creation of the nineteen schools for apprentice artisans established by presidential decree nº 7.566. The three chapters are disproportionately long, and their division reveals the periodization chosen by the author, which in historiographical works is fundamental, as it unveils their political intentionality (Rusen, 2007):

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1 This research is part of a larger study – a doctoral thesis, not yet defended/published, on the history of IFBA. In addition to studying biographies, documentary research was conducted in archives and thematic oral history interviews were carried out. The archival research did not find any documentation relating to Professor Lessa. One of the interviewees, a retired employee who worked with Professor Lessa, stated that the professor did not hold any management positions, but had a good relationship with the administration, which allowed him to consult the institutional archives to undertake his research. She also stated that the project for the historical memory center of CEFET-BA was not developed because Professor Lessa passed away shortly after the publication of the book.

- a) The first chapter has forty-five pages (the longest) and covers more than eighty years of organizational history, from its creation as a school for apprentice artisans in 1909, to the enactment of federal law no. 8,711 of 1993, which created CEFET-BA;
- b) The second chapter has eight pages (the shortest) and recounts the creation of CENTEC in 1976 until its extinction following its merger with the Federal Technical School of Bahia, creating CEFET-BA;
- c) The third chapter has twenty-one pages and narrates the details of the creation of CEFET-BA and the main events of its then nine years of existence, such as the expansion to other municipalities in the state, the celebrations for the organization's ninetieth anniversary in 1999, and the political problems in the election that took place between 2001 and 2002.

The name in the title, "porridge school", was the nickname given to the school in its early years, as the author recounts: " It was the porridge school, as it became known because it served food, usually in the form of porridge, which guaranteed the immediate survival of its students, who were considered unfortunate, as they were referred to in official speeches" (Lessa, 2002, p. 16).

Although the book consulted a wide range of the organization's documentary collection – ten photos, five organizational charts, a curriculum matrix, five tables, and seven charts are presented throughout – this documentation does not engage in dialogue with the text; it lacks interpretative substrate, reflective criticality, the process that transforms a document into a historical source (Aróstegui, 2006; Rusen, 2007). This archival collection only illustrates the work, it does not ground the narrative, a linear and traditional historiography, with an emphasis on dates and names of managers and politicians who mediated some event (expansion, reform, inauguration).

Perhaps this is because, in the author's words, the review does not possess "the rigor of scientific works" (Lessa, 2002, p. 87), although its historical value is indelible, being an important reference in subsequent biographies.

The second biography is titled " One Hundred Years of Vocational Education in Brazil - History and Memory of the Federal Institute of Bahia: 1909-2009". Organized by professors Vera Lúcia Bueno Fartes and Virlene Cardoso Moreira, it was published in 2009 by the UFBA (Federal University of Bahia) press. Professor Vera Fartes is a retired professor from the Faculty of Education at the Federal University of Bahia, whose academic career focused on research into vocational education, with an emphasis on professional knowledge; Professor Virlene Moreira is a History professor at IFBA – Salvador Campus, conducting research in the areas of history of science and education. There are no records indicating that, during or after the book's creation, they held management positions at the institute. The introduction was written by the then-Chancellor Aurina Santana, who highlights the commemorative nature of the

work due to the centenary of the federal vocational education network and the creation of the institute, as already indicated in the title. A book that symbolized the moment of change with the creation of the federal institutes between 2008 and 2009, as a result of law n<sup>o</sup>. 11.892 of 2008 <sup>2</sup>.

Unlike Lessa's work, this one has a more refined aesthetic finish and an organization more suited to collections of academic works. The 194 pages are spread across ten chapters, nine academic articles, and an exhibition of sketches (drawings) showing the physical expansion of the Salvador campus, the original unit, divided into five periods, totaling fourteen authors. At the end of the work, there is a photo album with twenty-six images and an emblem (coat of arms). As in the previous book, these are presented here as mere illustrations, without any theoretical effort to aid in the narrative construction, which would present photography as a signifier of social codes, as a historical artifact (Lima & Carvalho, 2009).

In the introduction, the editors suggest a classification order for the nine texts in the work: the first six chapters address themes concerning the institutional changes experienced by the organization in its one hundred years; two chapters discuss issues related to student practice and research; and, finally, one chapter collects oral histories from former managers, teaching and technical-administrative staff, as well as students.

Indeed, the first six chapters reinforce the historical identity perpetuated in Lessa's work, both in terms of the periodizations employed and the historically attributed value, as a place of assistance for the underprivileged and as a training ground for the world of work. The author is directly cited in four of the six texts – the fifth is basically a summary of the previous book. Only one surpasses the use of traditional sources and resorts to oral history to understand the meanings of the formation of the working-class identity of those who left the labor market (Fartes, 2009).

Two other texts address, respectively, student agency between 1979 and 1989, based on their involvement in the student movement inside and outside the organization, contrasting the linear official narrative prevalent in previous texts, and the organization's scientific output, based on indicators such as... Regulation of research activity, mapping of research groups registered with CNPq, publication in international impact journals, and cooperation network with various teaching and research organizations.

The final chapter gathers accounts from people who experienced the organization firsthand. In total, there are eleven testimonies: a former student (the oldest living at the time of publication), two former professors, the longest-serving active professor, a retired administrative technician, a faculty member who was a

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2 In research conducted by one of the authors in the archives of the IFBA rectorate in Salvador, several documents were found that corroborate the creation of the book as an instrument for celebrating the centenary of the federal network of professional education and the creation of the federal institutes, including guidelines and agreements from SETEC/MEC.

former student and held a managerial position, as well as the four former directors still alive at the time, and the chancellor of that period, Professor Aurina Santana.

The third biography is titled “Memories, Education and Knowledge Production at the Federal Institute of Bahia.” It was published in 2017 and was organized by José Roberto de Oliveira, Tassila Oliveira Ramos, and Vera Lúcia Bueno Fartes. It was the first biography published by the IFBA publishing house, which has fourteen authors among the twelve texts that make up the work, totaling 344 pages. Of the three organizers, in addition to Professor Vera Fartes, organizer of the previous work, the other two are IFBA employees: Professor José Roberto de Oliveira, who was the pro-Vice-chancellor of extension at the time, and Tassila Ramos, archivist responsible for the coordination of institutional memory.

This combination of factors indicates a greater institutional presence of management in the completion of the project, a key piece in the intricate organizational political network, which would culminate in the elections the following year, marked by a series of injunctions, notifications, and all sorts of legal mechanisms, thus revealing the political bias of its publication<sup>3</sup>. The words of the then chancellor, Renato da Anuniação Filho, on page 20 of the preface he signed, denote this scenario: “we emphasize that some of the concrete actions, among the many that we have developed together with the efforts and dedication of the entire IFBA community, have shown us paths, indicated directions.”

The structure resembles the previous work, with the twelve chapters consisting of academic texts about the organization. It is divided into two parts: the first, entitled “Memories and trajectories of IFBA from the perspective of its researchers,” contains five texts with an emphasis on historical research. Two works stand out that research memories related to the founding of two campuses/units in the interior, in Vitória da Conquista and Irecê. These are the first texts of the biographies that give prominence to the expansion of the organization, experienced at different historical moments: the first in the 1990s, at the time of CEFET, the second in the context of discussions on the creation of the federal institutes, at the end of the 2000s.

The second part is entitled “Research and Knowledge Production at IFBA,” and is composed of seven texts, whose myriad of themes attest to the complexity of IFBA: from a historical-architectural study of the rectorate building to an ethnography on professional knowledge among metalworkers, passing through an investigation into the performance of quota students on the Barreiras campus; another text reports on the exchange of two Thai students on the Camaçari campus; the following addresses the challenges and possibilities of an intercultural indigenous degree in Porto Seguro, a region with several traditional communities; there is a study on the school inclusion of people with disabilities on the Salvador campus and, finally, a text that analyzes

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3 These documents can be accessed at <https://portal.ifba.edu.br/institucional2/eleicoes/2018/home>.

the public research policy of the federal network of professional, scientific and technological education.

Thus, this work attempts to map – without exhausting the subject, obviously – the numerous dimensions that comprise IFBA, in a way that previous works did not achieve, either due to the review aspect of the first or the commemorative nature of the second. This third biography reflects the plurality of collective memories that forge a centennial organization.

**Chart 1 – The three biographies of IFBA**

	<b>Biography 1</b>	<b>Biography 2</b>	<b>Biography 3</b>
<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2017</b>
Name	CEFET – BA: A historical overview: from the porridge school to the integrated technological education complex.	One hundred years of vocational education in Brazil: History and memory of the Federal Institute of Bahia: (1909-2009)	Memories, education and knowledge production at the Institute Federal University of Bahia (IFBA)
Number of authors	01	02 (organizers) 14 (authors of the articles)	03 (organizers) 14 (authors of the articles)
Number of chapters	03	10	12
Number of pages	100	194	344
Methodology	Qualitative (historical, bibliographical, documentary research)	Qualitative (biographical, bibliographical, documentary research, oral history)	Qualitative (biographical, bibliographical, documentary, ethnographic, oral history research)
Chronological order	Linear	Non-linear	Non-linear
Textual typology	Traditional historiography	Collection of Scientific Texts	Collection of Scientific Texts

## **HERMENEUTIC UNDERSTANDING: THE BIOGRAPHIES OF IFBA AS PLACES OF MEMORY**

In an organization like IFBA, there are two main areas of activity: one focused on pedagogical-academic processes, encompassing teaching, research, and outreach

practices, and another oriented towards administrative management. The first is carried out dialogically by faculty and students, with the participation and support of some administrative staff (librarians, pedagogues, teaching assistants, educational affairs technicians, etc.). The second is practiced by faculty members who hold managerial positions (pro-chancellors, departments, coordination), together with administrative staff (administrators, accountants, assistants, and administrative aides).

By intertwining these two axes of activity, we add what is here called politics, a set of practices and intersubjective relationships that foster social order and enable the exercise of government and human coexistence, even if conflictual (Mouffe, 2015). This political dimension is understood in two ways: as *external policy*, the relationships that the organization develops with other social entities (governmental bodies, private companies, civil society organizations), and as *internal policy*, the instances of agency that occur within the organization (collegiate bodies, councils, other advisory and deliberative bodies, student unions), through processes such as meetings, sessions, consultations, and elections.

Thus, these three dimensions – pedagogical-academic, technical-managerial, and political – allow us to unveil the main characteristics of IFBA, serving as an instrument for understanding the details and highlighting oversights in biographies, which tend to exalt or erase certain organizational aspects.

**Table 1** – Categories of analysis in the biographies of IFBA

	Biography 1			Biography 2			Biography 3		
Chapter	Categories of analysis								
	Technical-Managerial	Policy	Pedagogical-Academic	Technical-Managerial	Policy	Pedagogical-Academic	Technical-Managerial	Policy	Pedagogical-Academic
1		x	x		x	x		x	x
2		x	x		x	x		x	x
3		x	x		x	x		x	x
4	NA	NA	NA		x	x	x	x	x
5	NA	NA	NA		x	x	x	x	x
6	NA	NA	NA		x	x	x	x	
7	NA	NA	NA		x	x		x	x
8	NA	NA	NA	x	x	x	x	x	x
9	NA	NA	NA	x	x	x		x	x
10	NA	NA	NA	x				x	x
11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		x	x
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		x	x

**Note.** NA – Not applicable.

After reading the three biographies, it became clear that it was necessary to begin the comprehensive analysis with Lessa's work (2002), since the elaboration of the other works reinforces or rejects the rhetoric and postulates of the pioneering text. In his historical review, the author does not present any aspect related to technical-

managerial activities. Administrative and financial difficulties are mentioned, but not detailed. What is presented are the actions of politicians (governors, ministers, parliamentarians) who allocate funds for organizational reforms. But who designed the project? Who executed it? Even if, in the early days of the organization, such tasks did not have the complexity that the bureaucracy of today demands, this oversight reveals the neglect of this dimension.

For example, on page 21, a table of enrollment and attendance by year is displayed for the period 1910-1933. What did these numbers mean to the administrators? Was there any government oversight? Did the concept of dropout exist? Was the school considered a public policy?

Another example is the ETFBA organizational chart from 1969 on page 39. Its presentation reveals an effort to map the organizational structure and seek some structural cohesion. Its structure was a hybrid between line-advisory and functional, where a certain confusion is perceived with the overlapping of supervisions (regular courses, extraordinary courses, and workshops). A better definition was lacking to separate, for example, the administrative department from the academic/teaching department, which is common nowadays.

An analysis of the aforementioned organizational chart corroborates the argument of the suppression of the technical-managerial dimension in the narrative. Typical management functions, such as treasury, school cashier, archives, among others, appear in the organizational chart, but there is no description of how these activities were performed. There is no record of any technical-administrative employee. It is impossible to know, for example, if there were women performing any administrative function.

The political dimension, both internal and external, is the most prominent. Even the pedagogical-academic division, in several instances, results from decisions made by various political agents and their relationships. Courses are created and discontinued to meet the needs of companies and government entities, such as ministries and municipalities. Contributing to this were the creation of the CIA – Aratu Industrial Center – and the Camaçari petrochemical complex, a municipality located in the metropolitan region of Salvador, as well as demands from Petrobras, COPENE, and USIBA, which directed the choices of course offerings.

The electoral selection processes for leadership are highlighted in several passages. Turbulent moments such as the elections of 1974 and 1986, when it was still ETFBA, and of 2001, already as CEFET, indicate how problematic the three-candidate list system was. With the creation of the federal institutes, this mechanism was altered and the election became direct.

The creation of CENTEC is a turning point that breaks the linearity of the historical narrative of previous institutions (schools for apprentice artisans, the Bahian high school, the Salvador technical school, and ETFBA) and subsequent ones

(CEFET), whose history tends to be erased. The reduced size of its chapter compared to the other two denotes this stance.

Created through the collaboration of various entities (Ministry of Education, Federal Council of Education, British Council, CIA), CENTEC aimed to offer higher education technological training, which is why it differed from technical schools. There was a plan led by PRODEM – an *ad hoc task force* created by the Ministry of Education to train professionals intermediate between technical secondary education and higher education. Financed by the World Bank – International Development Bank – this new professional, called an operations engineer, would work at a tactical-operational level, freeing up engineers to work in strategic areas. The initial idea was to create six units – in addition to Bahia, in Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Paraná. These education centers would, a priori, be under the supervision of federal technical schools (Ministry of Education [MEC], 1974).

Reading Lessa's work, one can perceive the movement that guided the creation of CENTEC: initially operating provisionally in Salvador, in 1978 the assets (equipment, furniture) acquired for CENTEC's operation, which were under the tutelage of ETFBA, were transferred. In 1981, CENTEC began operating in the municipality of Simões Filho, in the metropolitan region of Salvador, near the CIA. Throughout the decade, the weakening of this policy, coupled with local problems, led the institution to a state of idleness. Thus, in 1993, with the creation of CEFET from ETFBA, it encompassed CENTEC. In other words, CENTEC emerged from the bowels of ETFBA and returned to it, now under the name CEFET.

Throughout the subsequent biographies, there is a subtle process of erasing the fact, mentioned by a former director in the second biography – which recounts how the merger was criticized by part of the academic community at the time – and very little mentioned in the third – there are only two references to CENTEC, both as context, without any analytical approach. This practice is part of the discussions about the dialectic of memory-forgetting as a conflictive process of disputes and choices, in which the politics of memory function as strategic resources in power struggles (Nissley & Casey, 2002; Casey & Olivera, 2011; Costa & Saraiva, 2011).

The memory-forgetting dialectic described above indicates that biographies are places of memory because they incite their readers to question the mnemonic reservoir available to them (Nora, 1993). And reading the biographies of IFBA reveals how certain values have taken ingrained in the organization, becoming a common reference among its members, who narrate and transmit such principles in an unreflective way, often reifying them without realizing it.

One of these values is the use of the term "*Headquarters*" to refer to the teaching unit located in Salvador. As the organization's original location, it encompassed a large part of its history. With the enactment of the law that created CEFET, and the creation of decentralized teaching units in the interior (UNED), this term was

institutionalized in the internal regulations of CEFET – BA - Ordinance No. 777, of July 24, 1996, of the Ministry of Education.

The use of the term *Headquarters* reveals a differentiation, a division between the Salvador unit and the newly created Uneds at the time. Its use refers to the idea of centrality, of residence, and evoked a "headquarters culture," in which the employees stationed at the Uneds attributed practices and values such as inefficiency of services, excessive bureaucracy, unwillingness to resolve emerging issues, and precariousness in serving the public (external/internal) (Santos, 2014).

The second biography – “One Hundred Years of Professional Education in Brazil - History and Memory of the Federal Institute of Bahia: 1909-2009” – ends up being a transitional work between Lessa's narrative and the third: although it alters the structural model of the narrative of the first text, exploring multiple authorship, a good part of the texts uses the narrative periodization outlined in Lessa's text, which is widely cited. The historical context also derives from the previous biography.

Furthermore, as in Lessa's text, the technical dimension of the organization is overlooked, to the detriment of the emphasis on pedagogical-academic issues, always based on the political variables concerning the objects analyzed. Moreira (2009), for example, when covering the period between 1909 and 1937, understands that the school of apprentices and artisans (EAA) fulfilled a role of social control, whose existence did not necessarily mean a consolidated educational system project and that the EAA represented a survival alternative.

Leal Neto, Brito, and Antoniazzi (2009) analyze the scenario of vocational education reforms within the context of neoliberal capitalism, arguing for the recursive relationship between this context and the relations between education and work in public vocational education policy. However, they failed to connect this conjuncture with the dynamics of the organization's internal politics.

In this sense, Silva (2009) hesitates to connect the dynamics of change in the relationship between the state and civil society during the transition from the military regime to the political opening in the 1980s with the political contingent of the organization when reporting on the agency of the student movement both internally and externally to the then federal technical school of Bahia. The author scrutinizes a theme raised by Lessa, which did not receive the depth that such an episode demanded in the first biography, given its importance in breaking the official narrative of the organization, conferring political primacy to the students. The censorship imposed by the military dictatorship resonated within the school environment, and the student movement's actions had important consequences, such as the change in the school's administration.

These two texts serve as a transition between the reified historical narrative that marks the previous five works and the final part of the biography.

In investigating the organization's scientific output, Souza and Ribeiro (2009) introduce some innovations compared to the first biography. First, by focusing on research rather than teaching. Second, by investigating research with an emphasis on its two stages of completion: not only its purpose – in this case, scientific publication in high-impact journals – but also the technical process that leads to it. That is, all the bureaucratic steps involving research groups, support foundations, study committees, and coordination. It is the first text of the two biographies that gives some relevance to technical work.

The following text is a place of memory within a place of memory (biography) by presenting oral testimonies from individuals who were part of the history of IFBA. The article succeeds in seeking representativeness, covering all categories (students, faculty, and administrative staff, as well as managers), but fails to interweave and interpret the narratives. The authors' choice (Santos & Moreira, 2009) renders these accounts mere descriptions.

The narrative of student Carlos Cardoso, who studied between 1938 and 1942, highlights the hardships and vicissitudes of that period. The narrator hints at signs of corruption in the management of student meals and discusses both the routine of teaching practices and the pedagogical structure, emphasizing the subjects, as well as reinforcing the discourse of the technical school aimed at the most needy.

Next, professor Josias Seixas recounts his forty years of experience in the organization. The content of his account largely corroborates the facts listed by Lessa.

The account of Ângelo Cardoso, who was first a student and then a teacher, is imbued with nostalgia. The longing for the more disciplined times he misses leads him to assert that his time at ETFBA was better than at CEFET.

Almir Costa Souza Filho's narrative is one of the most compelling. As he himself says on page 154, "I have many stories to tell about the school." Like Ângelo, he was a student who became a teacher. He developed his entire professional career within the organization. He was the administrative director and general director of the Valença unit. He recounts the lack of appreciation for the managerial work of the administrative-technical staff. The professor provides details about various political events that occurred within the organization, such as the intervention during the military regime in the early 1970s and the formation of groups to compete for the directorship. He digresses on the selection processes for people occupying managerial positions and on the change from CEFET to IFBA.

Ms. Jane Ribeiro worked as a librarian for five years. Her brief testimony allows us to grasp several aspects: the diverse ways of entering the public sector through competitive examinations, the various activities a librarian could perform, such as managing a school cash to raise funds or advising students – something unthinkable in today's landscape of specialized tasks. One also perceives the lament of someone

forced to leave their job to dedicate themselves to domestic life, which prompts reflection on the structural sexism of that time.

Norma Souza is another who joined the organization as a student and continued her career as a professor, eventually serving as chief of staff to then-chancellor Aurina. Her testimony is brief and doesn't offer many details or information.

Finally, the testimonies of the former directors who were alive at the time are presented: Roberto Trípodí, Antônio Barral, Elias Ramos, Ruy Santana, as well as chancellor Aurina Santana. These are generic testimonies, although some details of political processes are narrated, such as the first direct election at ETFBA in 1986, the creation of CEFET with the merger between ETFBA and CENTEC in 1993, and the turbulent election of 2001.

The third book – “Memories, Education and Knowledge Production at the Federal Institute of Bahia” – while engaging with the previous ones, has a broader scope, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the new institutional framework. Published in 2017, approximately nine years after the creation of the federal institutes, the work maps the diverse political, pedagogical-academic, and mnemonic activities that permeate the organization.

This temporality inherent to the federal institute, to a certain extent, breaks with the regime of historicity proposed in Lessa's work. Citations to the author are reduced, and even texts that investigate past issues expand the horizon of understanding, as pointed out by the texts of Lima and Magalhães (2017) and Lins, Carneiro Jr. and Lopes (2017). Both address the expansion and decentralization that marks the multi-campus nature of the federal institute – although the first text recounts the creation of the Vitória da Conquista unit, which occurred during the time of CEFET.

In the first text, six accounts were heard from agents involved (the director of UNED, the director of teaching, two professors, a former student, and an administrative technician). In the second, although the narrative is always in the third person, which denotes impersonality, one of the authors, a professor from the Irecê campus, was an interlocutor in the founding of the campus.

The texts emphasize the political dimension in the completion of the projects, detailing the intricate web of institutional arrangements. Government officials from all three levels of government were involved, either accelerating or delaying the inauguration of the units. Changes in government and vested interests guided the decision-making process.

In Vitória da Conquista, five years passed between the signing of the agreement between the city hall, ETFBA (Technical School of Bahia) and MEC (Ministry of Education) and the inauguration of the unit – 1989/1994. Political disputes involving the city hall and the municipal council regarding the allocation of resources and authorship of amendments, in addition to changes in the federal government, explain the delay in the inauguration.

In Irecê, the creation of the campus occurred within the context of the PNPB – the national biodiesel production program, which took place between 2004 and 2008, a period of significant investment in this type of fuel. Irecê is one of the main Brazilian centers for the production of castor beans, a plant that provides sustainable fuel. In theory, this should have accelerated the operation of the campus. However, four years passed between the call for proposals promoted by the Ministry of Education in 2007 and the start of the first classes in 2011.

Both texts bring a technical dimension to the discussion by highlighting the initial operational difficulties, resulting both from power imbalances that lead to conflicts between governmental bodies and from the organization's lack of management planning to deal with its new structural configuration.

Indeed, the technical dimension takes up more space in this third biography. Rocha (2017) recounts the changes in the building that now houses the IFBA's rectorate, but which throughout its history housed the Marist school, founded by the order of the same name in 19th-century France and which expanded throughout the world with the aim of disseminating Catholic education. Its listing as a historical landmark and subsequent transfer to IFBA involved the efforts of civil society, revealing the political action in the face of economic voracity, considering that the building is located in a prime area of Salvador and real estate speculation surrounding the property was intense. Furthermore, there is the author's technical task of relating the constructs of space, memory, and identity.

Santana and Ribeiro (2017) articulate technique and politics in a fundamental discussion today: school inclusion and diversity, when focusing on the situation of students with disabilities on the Salvador campus. The discussion is technical because it implies tangible improvements, such as accessibility structures, and intangible ones, such as training for staff, considering that most public service exams do not require tacit knowledge in this area. But its promotion is political, given that today school inclusion is a public policy guided by various legal instruments that direct the decision-making of public managers. Such resolutions impact student performance: that is, it is also a pedagogical-academic issue.

The following texts address issues that intertwine the three dimensions, dealing with the complex challenges of a diffuse reality: Sousa and Brito (2017) analyze the process of creating and implementing the Intercultural Indigenous Degree – LINTER, at the Porto Seguro *Campus*. From the specific technicality that requires a multidisciplinary team to deal with contingencies intrinsic to its achievement – ethnologists, archaeologists, pedagogues, and social workers – which results in pedagogical practice in the classroom, there is an epistemic process, that is, the construction of a practical form of knowledge in the task of indigenous teaching and learning, based on the specific training of teachers for this purpose.

This path is governed by a series of legal instruments guiding public policy, such as resolution n°. 03/1999 of the National Education Council, which defines that teaching in indigenous schools must be carried out by indigenous teachers. Thus, it is the State's duty to develop specific courses for the training of indigenous teachers, in accordance with the legal parameters of indigenous school education; in other words, there is a political externality that fosters the process.

Pereira's text (2017) describes the stages of the exchange process of two Thai students on campus. Camaçari. In the technical dimension, it explains the function of each sector involved in the activity – which involved, for example, the teaching department and the international relations office of IFBA; in the political dimension, it shows IFBA's relationships with organizations that promote exchange programs, such as AFS Intercultural. The pedagogical-academic dimension reports on the classroom practices adapted to the two exchange students, based on the analytical model "nine stages of the exchange student adaptation cycle".

Ferraz and Ferreira (2017) analyze the performance of quota students at the Barreiras *Campus* between 2010 and 2014. Based on the pedagogical-academic practice of teaching and learning, technical knowledge is produced. This, in turn, is guided by affirmative action policies, the result of years of intense struggles within civil society. The high dropout and failure rates found in the research show that structural changes are not achieved instantaneously, but after a long process of adjusting practices, as has been the focus through student assistance/retention policies.

The other research, to some extent, is a continuation of the first or second biography. Santiago and Silva (2017) study the school newspaper *O Aprendiz*, published in the 1940s, presented here as a pedagogical tool – considering that it was produced by students under the supervision of the librarian – and as a place of memory used to reflect on technical education at the time and the transformations promoted by the Vargas government in education, such as the Capanema reform. The student newspaper appears in several passages of Lessa's review – on page 32, for example, a note by the then director Ericsson Cavalcanti published in the newspaper dealing with the organization's relationship with the productive sector is reproduced *verbatim* – and in Jane Ribeiro's testimony in the second biography (p. 159, emphasis added):

There were difficulties in certain initiatives, such as *reactivating the newspaper with the collaboration of students*; the major obstacle was the lack of writing skills among secondary school students, since the legislation for this level of education did not require completion of primary school for enrollment. Therefore, the number of primary school contributors was small. Hence the initiative to give occasional classes to groups of students to correct their written texts.

Venturini (2017) and Almeida and Sampaio (2017) repeat discussions and historicizations made in previous biographies. The first mimics Lessa's historiography, focusing on the treatment given to physical education as a curricular element in vocational education. If there is any progress in their text, it is in bringing in testimonies that help to perceive contradictions in foreign policy, which placed physical education as part of a political project of nationhood underway at the time – especially during the military regime in the 1970s – and how the student body reinterpreted such values, rejecting them.

The second text revisits discussions about the relationship between education and work within the context of late capitalism. It presents some updated data on the growth of vocational education in the almost ten years since the creation of the federal institutes, but its theoretical contribution is limited.

The work of Mota and Peixoto (2017) revisits the discussion initiated by Souza and Ribeiro (2009) in the previous biography, placing research as the main focus of investigation. Here, the emphasis is on the macro level, that is, research in the federal network of professional education is investigated, based on the phases of a public policy (planning, implementation, decision-making process, evaluation). Although the indicators used here are the same as in the previous research – research groups, number of PhDs, postgraduate programs, distribution of programs by region – and the text seems to follow it thematically, IFBA is not even mentioned – which prevents a dialogue between the macro and microstructural dimensions of research as a public policy.

The last text, by Brito (2017), revisits the concerns of Fartes (2009) work regarding the knowledge that forges the professional identity of vocational education graduates in a work context. Both texts mobilize the representations that technical professionals make of themselves during their training and later in the job market. These texts are concerned with the political and pedagogical-academic dimension of the organization, ignoring the technical dimension involved in student training.

## FINAL REMARKS

This research investigated how three biographies serve as places of memory that reveal the intricacies of a federal institute of education, science, and technology. The historical-hermeneutic methodology allowed us to understand that there is an interdependent relationship between the narrative elaborations of an organizational history, such as the three biographies studied here, and the way the organization is situated in the social world, since those are places of memory that demonstrate how the organization manages its past both in relation to the external community and to its internal members.

The linear historical narrative and the emphasis on dates and names of managers are the hallmarks of the first book. With the endorsement of organizational management and access to a considerable amount of documents, the author produces an intelligible narrative, more descriptive than analytical-interpretative, covering ninety-three years of history in less than 100 written pages.

The following biographies break with the traditional linear narrative model of the first text, due to their multiple authors. In fact, they are collections of articles, and one might question whether they are truly biographies. However, by including the term "memory" in their titles, and because they were written by employees of the organization, they end up fitting the contemporary definition of biography: narrative writing situated in the space between science and art, history and fiction, imagination and reality (Loriga, 2011).

The political dimension is present in all three biographies, whether as a protagonist in the organizational direction or as the fabric that shapes its events. It is the mainstay, sometimes invisible, but always crucial, upon which the practices that define its achievement are erected.

Access to the political dimension is made possible by its temporal foundation, positioning the organization as a mnemonic community, a reservoir of narratives that historically constitute it. Memory, the compass of History, reveals omissions, illuminates excesses, appeases or fosters conflicts, allowing us to identify the characteristics that permeate the constitution of reality.

A reality discerned here through the knowledge generated by the need for the organic functioning of the organization, but also as its *raison d'être*, seeking to contribute to the continuous improvement of collective life, meeting the requirements stipulated in the law that created it.

This study aims to contribute both quantitatively and qualitatively to historical studies in education, specifically in vocational education: firstly, by discussing the history of vocational education, a subfield neglected in the history of education; and secondly, by addressing a collective entity, given that a large part of the scientific production of a biographical nature investigates individual trajectories (Amorim et al, 2024; Duarte & Grazziotin, 2018).

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